

Chester County Court House
10 North High Street
West Chester
Chester County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1119

HABS
PA
15- WCHES,
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington Planning and Service Center
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

ABSTRACT
FOLLOWS...

CHESTER COUNTY COURT HOUSE

Location: 10 North High Street, West Chester, Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Present Use: Chester County Court House.

Statement of Significance: This court house, the subject of many controversies, was designed by Thomas U. Walter.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: County of Chester, Pennsylvania.
2. Date of erection: 1846 at an actual cost of \$55,345.98. Officially opened February 22, 1848.
3. Architect, builder, suppliers etc.: Architect: Thomas U. Walter for a fee of \$1,911.70. Builder's bid of William Ingram, Chalkley Jefferis, James Powell and David H. Taylor for \$44,749.67 was accepted.
4. Original plans, construction etc.: Original plan not known.
5. Alterations and additions: Original south entrance has been changed into a window. Contemporary newspapers were concerned with the problem of a south or east front (example is attached, see Part I, D). In 1893 an addition 50 feet by 135 feet of Indiana limestone was finished (T. Roney Williamson, architect, and Plummer E. Jefferis, contractor), at a cost of \$75,030.00. In the last decade there has been a need of additional room and the building to the north has been converted to house many offices and also an additional court room, for the newly created Orphans Court, has been added. A sun dial was erected in 1857. (See copy of newspaper account under Part I, D of this report.) A fountain was erected in 1869. (See copy of newspaper account under Part I, D of this report.) The clock erected in the old Court House in 1836 was moved to the present one and was in use, with repairs, until 1955, when new works were installed. (See copies of newspaper accounts under Part I, D of this report.)

6. Important old views and references: All views listed may be seen in the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania.

"Chester County Court House T. U. Walter, Archt. MDCCXLVI. Printed by F. Kuhl, Philada. Executed on Stone by W. H. Rease, No. 17 So 5th St. Philada."

Oval cut on "Map of the East and West Goshen Townships and the Borough of Westchester" published by Smith & Wistar, 15 Minor Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1849.

Colored cut on "Map of Chester County, Pennsylvania" by T. J. Kennedy. R. L. Barnes, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1856.

Photo - 1870 taken from the court house looking east and showing the cast-iron fence.

Colored print - "Chester County Court House Published by Charles G. Taylor 1861. Taylor Del. Lith. & Printed by W. H. Rease 4th & Chestnut Sts. Phila."

J. Smith Futhey and Gilbert Cope: History of Chester County, Pennsylvania. Louis H. Everts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1881, facing page 119.

"Details of Marble Work, Chester County Court House T. U. Walter Arch. Phil. March 30, 1846 Scale 8 feet to an inch." Original in the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania.

All sources of information listed below are to be found in the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania, unless otherwise noted.

G. Carroll Lindsay: Athens on High Street--The Architectural Works of Thomas U. Walter in West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1955 (typed thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, University of Delaware; copy in the Library of the University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware).

J. Smith Futhey and Gilbert Cope: History of Chester County, Pennsylvania. Louis H. Everts, Philadelphia, 1881.

Arthur E. James: Chester County Clocks and Their Makers. Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1947.

Wilmer W. MacElree: Side Lights on the Bench and Bar of

Chester County. West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1918 (no publisher given).

Classified printed and manuscript files of Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania, under heading: Public Offices. Court House.

Minutes of the Meetings of the Chester County Commissioners, 1835-1862. Longhand.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

When the county seat was removed from Chester (in present day Delaware County) to West Chester in 1786, tremendous excitement was aroused over this new location for a court house. When the 1786 building became too small and a new one was proposed, as much or more excitement was produced as to the real need, and if needed, how it should face. Both court houses were used more or less as town meeting rooms. Rousing patriotic meetings were held during the Civil War, many churches met here, well-known public characters addressed the townspeople etc. Memorable court trials have been well recorded in the book by W. W. MacElree listed in the bibliography. Clipping files in the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania, record chronologically the events, year by year.

C. Supplemental Material:

Direct quotations from the following:

1. "Mr. Editor - It is understood that the Commissioners are visiting the public buildings of the neighboring towns with a view to the erection of our new county buildings; it may therefore be appropriate now, that the people of the county (who cannot be indifferent) should be acquainted with the merits of location. The arguments in favor of an eastern front need only to be stated to show how insufficient they are. First - that there is more traveling on the eastern street; - second - that a southern front will be opposite to a place where an old barn stood, (Heaven save the mark) - third - that the form of the lot will better suit an eastern front. As to the first: it is a powerful objection to an eastern front, for an entrance should not face the most noisy street, a court room should be as quiet as possible. The second is very poetical and worthy of the LITERATI. The third is untenable, for as the lot is about thirty feet longer on the south, and upwards of 160 feet deep, it will suit a building of almost any shape, and leave more room for yards on the east and west, and an ample yard on the south. Besides, it is an established rule in architecture to face the building south, in order to obtain the most favorable disposition of light. Again: a southern exposure is always

preferred, because it is dryer and warmer and free from ice, as every man is aware of who understands the points of the compass. Again: a southern front will be more conspicuous, on account of the vacant lot opposite, and because the high buildings on High Street would, in a great measure, conceal an eastern front. Again: a southern front will be more convenient and less expensive, because of the great inclination of the ground south would give more room and light for the offices if they be in the basement. Again: the southern front is nearly horizontal, while an eastern front would be on the side of a hill. If, therefore, the Commissioners regard the appearance of the building, PUBLIC convenience, and the PUBLIC wishes, and their own good common sense they will be at no loss where to locate the front.

PLAINDEALER."

The Village Record, West Chester, Pennsylvania, December 16, 1845./

2.

FOR THE RECORD
COURT HOUSE
Air - 'Old Rosin the Bow.'

"Come all ye tax-payers of Chester,
Attention to me now I pray;
A gloom seems to hang o'er our County,
Let's drive the foul darkness away.

"They've agreed to build a new COURT HOUSE
And commence it next summer they say:
The way it shall front they're divided,
So there's where the MISCHIEF doth lay.

"Some wish it to front to the Southward,
And their views to the public display,
Whilst others go in for the Westward,
And wish for a more private way.

"Some wish it to front the North eastward,
Whilst many from them disagree;
We now will give you our idea,
Sure none can dissatisfied be.

"To no point of the compass we're partial,
We'll have it FRONT EACH WAY you see;
We'll take a bird's egg for our model,
And that, let the form of it be.

"First thing, we will form the foundation:
The true size and shape we will take,
We design the large end for the cellar,
And the small one the apex to make.

"An EXPENSE we will SAVE in the roofing,
Which is very essential you see;
Doors and windows we will place all around it,
In style and neat symmetry.

"The Court-floor we will place on a pivot,
Like our Editor's rotary chair,
Attached to a vane at the summit,
To wheel with the current air.

"Now none can find fault with the fronting,
Either inside or out we declare;
The outside will be of a sameness,
And the inside will front with the air.

"The vex'd question we now think is settled,
And the minds of the people at ease;
The gloom has entirely vanished,
Or surely they're hard for to please.

W. G. & Co."

Village Record, West Chester, Pennsylvania, January 13,
1846.

3.

"NEW COURT HOUSE

"The Commissioners of Chester county advertise for proposals, it will be seen, for putting up the new county buildings. We understand the plan fixed is as follows: The building is oblong in form - 119 feet by 62 - main entrance on High Street, with a portico; and an entrance in the centre of the Southern front. The Southern front, is finished with pilasters which extend from the ground to the roof. The Court room is on the 2nd story, 60 $\frac{1}{2}$ by 57 feet in the clear; the county offices below. The capacity of the Court room is about double that of the present. The plan was drawn by Walters.

"The building will be constructed of brick, with six columns on High street somewhat in the style of the Bank of Chester county. The building will be commenced early in the spring."

Village Record, West Chester, Pennsylvania, February 24,
1846.

4.

"Names of Persons furnishing Materials and Labour in the Construction of the Chester County Court house

Stone:

Townsend Eachus
Charles M Layman
Edward Shields
Henry Jackson

Sand:

Enos Smedley

Marble:

James McCann
Amos B McFarland

Bricks:

Nicholas Mendenhall
Philip P Sharpless
William Everhart

Lime:

Abner Baldwin Jr
Timothy Denny
Mordecai Lee
Amos B McFarland
Joseph Sheppard
John Todd

Excavating Cellar:

George Jones

Masonry:

William Brown
George Bugless Jr
Ezekiel Benner
Elhamman Benner
John Battin
Oliver Farra
Samuel Good
James Hannum
Perry Heck
Thomas Pharoah
Emmor Ramage
Washington Simcox
Townsend Entrikin
Moses Walker

Bricklayers:

James Bayard Jefferis
Alban Ingram
William Hoopes
Jasper Darlington
Philip Price
Marshall Battin
John Burns

Carpenters:

Benjamin Gregg
John Sellars Dresser
Samuel Davis
Abel Green
James Ingram
William Lamborne
Emmor Townsend
Houston Way
Joel Woodward
William Slack

Labourers:

Charles Burnett
Richard Crosslow
Levi Cummins
John Hall
Samuel Sowder
James Moore
Owen McDonough
John Porsel
Henry Ruthven
Dominick Rogers
Charles Smith
John Sandford
Solomon Burton
William Gibbons
Jacob Harris
Israel Hill
Joseph Miller
Orange Milby
George Nixon

Iron Work:

Edge J Cope

Painter:

J. H. Hardy

Marble Masons:

James Parke
Matthew Parke
William Brannan
Patrick Hasson
Hugh Lafferty
Robert Graham
Gilpin Williams

Marble Sawyers:

William Clay
James Fox
John Laughlin
Thomas Callahan"

/From original in Chester County Historical Society.7

5.

For the Republican & Democrat.

THOUGHTS ON READING

A visit to the New Court House, at West Chester, Pa.,
October 18, 1847

"O Folly, here thy genius shall preside,
 Around these walls erected in thy name;
And here, when sixty years about shall glide,
 Will rogues with seeming honesty decide,
That these base bricks shall topple down in shame.

"Here sees my wandering eyes (not sights sublime,))
 Some foplings in thy presence-chamber stride,
Who pant for glory in all coming time,
 Around whose faces bushy whiskers climb,
True samples they of ignorance and pride.

"The foremost of that train may now be here,
 With Chitty, Blackstone, and a score of books,
Much learning in their arms, as doth appear,
 Too little in their heads, 'tis very clear,
And empty quackery in all their looks.

"Here rule, O Folly, thou with pompous gait!
 Be thankful that their fortunes are not worse;
The poor submit to have their wrongs increased,
 And lawyer, having with silver greased,
Possess the nonchalance of a cut-purse!

"I mount the rolling wheels of two past years,
 And swiftly speed along that much of time;-
O Folly, on the record there appears
 A tale that's written there with hopes and fears,
A catalogue of lies, perhaps of crime.

"I stand steadfast at this my starting place,
 And bid the facts a tale of truth rehearse,
Ask how Commissioners could so disgrace
 Themselves; and simple Jurors have the face
To swallow such a lie - if crime no worse.

"Again, I ask, whence comes this lordly hall?
 And whence the means by which 'twas raised so fast?
The people, cheated, reared the lofty wall,
 And future taxes yet the means must call,
Albeit Commiss'ners said 'twas lying past.

"I know 'twas shameful thus to state untruth
And cheat the honest country people good;
But 'borough' pride demands, had then, in sooth,
Cits little prize sincerity and truth,
Nor care if honest country people should.

"I see the people of full fourteen towns,*
The rich and poor, unrepresented 'mid the plot,
And, Folly, there were those who feared their frowns,
Or servants they, or borough cits, or clowns.
Who calls that Jury packed, or swears 'twas not?

"Yes, Folly, here thy genius shall preside,
Around these walls erected on this plain,
And here, when sixty years about shall glide,
May other rogues as honestly decide,
That these base bricks shall topple down again.

"Here shall 'the almighty dollar' chime his ring,
And Freedom's altar - Hope and Virtue's trust.
The glorious 'stars and stripes' their treasures bring,
And pray protection from a Heavenly King,
Till fraud and folly crumble into dust.

"Oxford, Pa.

J.M."

"*The reader who remembers that fourteen adjoining and contiguous townships in the Southwest of the county, known to be opposed to the erection of the New Court House, were entirely unrepresented in the last Grand Jury recommending the undertaking, will understand and appreciate the allusions in this stanza."

American Republican, West Chester, Pennsylvania, January 21, 1847.

6. "The workmen are busily engaged in erecting walls around the new Court House, in this Borough. The wall will be surmounted with a broad coping, and upon that will be erected a handsome iron railing. Everything is done with taste and substantiability."

Village Record, West Chester, Pa., May 16, 1848.

7. West Chester Sep. 12. 1848
Commissioners of Chester County

1847-Dec.23. "To Thomas U. Walter Dr.
To detail drawings of Court
house and superintendence
of the work contracted for

by Ingram, Jefferis & Co.
as per agreement \$1100.00

1848-Sep.12 " designs and superintendence
of work done in fitting up
the offices, yard walls,
privies, Iron railing coping
&c from Jan. 1 to Sep.12.1848." 400.00

" travelling expenses incurred
in visiting the court house
from Feb.2.1846 to Sep.12.
1848." 311.70
\$1811.70

Pr.
1846-Oct.17. By Cash \$500.00
1848-Jan.5. " do 500.00
Aug.3 " do 100.00 1100.00
Sep.13 " do \$711.70
400.00
311.70

Recd Payment in full
West Chester Nov. 16.1848
Tho. U. Walter

/Original manuscript in possession of the Chester County
Historical Society, West Chester, Pa./

8. "A HANDSOME DONATION. - Mr. John Hall, one of our oldest and most respectable citizens, who has for many years been following the business of a Watchmaker, has erected in the Court House yard at his own expense a most beautiful Sun Dial. It is set in the most substantial manner, and will remain a fit and appropriate monument, we hope, for years of the generous donor. This Dial is made by Mr. Young the mathematical instrument maker of Philadelphia, the plate being of plated silver, and the index or arm that casts the shadow, of heavy brass. The plate is marked with Roman numerals from 1 to XII and on it is engraved, 'ERECTED BY JOHN HALL, JUNE 1857.' Mr. Hall had everything prepared and wished to have it erected last June when there was no equation, but he failed to get the work done until recently. This is a handsome improvement, and the whole county will feel indebted to Mr. Hall for that which may be used by all who visit West Chester."

/American Republican, West Chester, Pa., August 4, 1857./

9. REPAIRING THE COURT HOUSE.

Mr. EDITOR: - There is an old saying 'that a stitch in time will save nine,' if properly done. This might be aptly applied to the Court House in your borough.

"The architect who planned it, I understand recommended to the County Commissioners to have the outside of it finished in mastic work, considering that a neat, and at the same time, durable finish. In this it would seem that he did not understand his business, or misled them, for the work did not last more than about five years before it commenced peeling off; and it has been repaired within the last four years at an expense of about \$2000, and now looks worse than ever. This mastic work now hangs about the building in shreds not unlike a snake shedding its skin in the spring of the year. I think it would have looked much better, been cheaper, and more durable had it been made of dressed stone of some kind, or even pressed bricks, in the first instance. This patching up is 'like the Indian's gun, costing more than it comes to.' All repairs done to such a building ought to be durable ones, and then little repairing would be needed. I was in the Commissioners' office a few days ago, and was much pleased with a plan they had there, which was submitted to them by a practical stone cutter, showing how a handsome, and at the same time durable, finish on the outside of this building, with dressed freestone $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick, could be made, and fastened firmly in the wall with iron clamps, and at a cost less than most people would suppose. Every person who saw it seemed pleased with it, and thought that this was the most feasible plan, and would make the most durable job.

All agree that there will have to be something done before long, or the building will be a sad looking picture, and that no more patching up ought to be done, as it would be expense thrown away. The principle difficulty in the minds of the Commissioners, it would seem, is the scarcity of funds in the County Treasury, and they being careful men, are opposed to running the county in debt any more than they can well help.

On the score of Economy, if it should be thought advisable to adopt the above mentioned plan, I would suggest the propriety of the Commissioner's putting the Building under contract, to be completed in two or three years, as might be thought most advisable. This would enable them to pay for it by instalments; and by using prudent economy in other matters, the Treasury would not feel it sensibly. We would then have a neat, chaste, and durable Court House and public offices for the benefit of the people of the county to transact their business, and at the same

time would be a credit to their intelligence and good taste."

ECONOMIST.

Village Record, West Chester, Pa., February 16, 1858.]

10. "This Indenture made the sixteenth day of March AD one thousand eight hundred and fifty nine between William Gray John Paul, trading under the firm of Gray & Paul of the City of Philadelphia, of the one part and Joseph Russell, Titus Gheen and Benj. Hartman, Commissioners of Chester County of the other part; witnesseth that the said Gray & Paul, for and in consideration of the sum of twelve thousand dollars, do for themselves, their executors and administrators covenant, promise and agree to and with the Commissioners of Chester County as aforesaid that they the said Gray & Paul, shall & will on or before the fifteenth day of October next, in a good and workmanlike manner, and to the entire satisfaction of said Commissioners, well and substantially set up and face, the south & west sides of the Court House of said County situate in the Borough of West Chester, with blocks of the best pictou stone not less than four inches thick. The East and North west corner to be returned with stone, in accordance with the plans adopted & furnished by said Commissioners.

"In consideration whereof the said Commissioners of Chester County for themselves, and their successors do covenant & promise to and with the said Gray & Paul their executors & administrators well & truly to pay or cause to be paid unto the said Gray & Paul, their executors & administrators, the sum of twelve thousand dollars in manner following, to wit: one thousand dollars, part thereof when the first course of stone is laid: one thousand dollars other part thereof, when the window sills of the first story are set: two thousand dollars other part thereof, when the window heads of the first story are set: two thousand dollars, other part thereof when the window sills of the second story are set: three thousand dollars other part thereof when the caps of the pilasters are set thereon: and the remaining three thousand dollars in full for said work when the same shall be completely and satisfactorily finished: it being understood, that each and any of the foregoing payments shall be withheld at the times specified if the work so far done is unsatisfactory to said Commissioners.

"And it is further covenanted and agreed by and between the parties aforesaid that the said Gray and Paul are to cut out and remove four inches of the brick work from the external face of the wall of the said south and

west sides of said Court House from the marb base to the cornice: to completely take down and remove the pediments and buttresses on the south side and rebuild the same solidly of brick in the best manner and with the best material, facing them with stone as aforesaid: to remove the whole or so much of the principle cornice as may be necessary for the improvements & replace the same in a workmanlike manner: to furnish the best yellow pine beams 10 x 14 inches to support said pediments, should they be required, but if not necessary, then the value thereof is to be deducted from the last payment: to furnish all the stone on the ground and set the same with the best refined hydraulic cement or oil putty, securing them to the wall properly with iron clamps made for the purpose: to protect said sides of said building from the weather while the work is in progress and until it is completed, and upon the completion thereof to remove all dirt & rubbish from the premises and replace the pavements & fence.

"In testimony whereof the said Gray & Paul have hereunto set their hand & seal & the said Commissioners have also respectively set their hands & caused the seal of the said County to be attached. the day & year first above written.

Gray & Paul
Joseph Russell
Titus W Gheen
Benj. Hartman

"Witness present, The interlination on the first page made before signing

Robert Marshe
David Meconkey

"It is hereby covenanted and agreed by and between the parties to the within Indentures that the provisions and specifications therein set forth be and they are hereby extended so as to embrace the North side and East front of said Court House: the work thereon to be done and completed by the first day of January AD 1860: the said Commissioners to pay the said Gray & Paul their executors and administrators therefore, the additional sum of nine thousand three hundred dollars in manner following, to wit, eight hundred dollars part thereof when the first course of stone is laid: eight hundred dollars/? part thereof when the window sills of the first story are laid: seventeen hundred dollars other part thereof when the window heads of the first story are set: seventeen hundred dollars other part thereof when the window sills of the second story

are set: eighteen hundred dollars other part thereof when the caps of the pilasters are set thereon, and the remaining twenty five hundred dollars when the said work shall be fully and satisfactorily finished: the work on said side and front to be carried up uniformly.

"In witness whereof the said Gray & Paul have hereunto set their hand & seal, and the Commissioners have also respectively set their hands & caused the seal of the said County to be attached this fourth day of May. AD 1859."

Gray & Paul
Joseph Russell
Titus W. Gheen
Benj. Hartman

Witness present
Henry M. McIntire
Wm. Bell Waddell

/From the original in possession of the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa.]

11. "Nobody has visited West Chester lately, that has not lamented the awful breaking out all over the Court House. It is going to be repaired. The Commissioners have contracted to have the exterior faced with Pictou stone, of a brownish gray color. If well done, it will give the building a handsome substantial appearance."

/Jeffersonian, West Chester, Pa., April 2, 1859.]

12. Court House.

"Workmen have commenced upon the Court House, preparatory to facing it with Pictou stone, of quite a pretty grindstone shade. We have heard various opinions expressed in reference to the undertaking, but the general impression is that our commissioners have adopted the wisest plan. We hope it may so prove."

/Jeffersonian, West Chester, Pa., April 30, 1859.]

13. The Court House.

"The Commissioners have determined to face the Court House with stone, will, I trust, allow a suggestion to be made to them. It is this, why not alter the South front to correspond with the North side of the building. Almost every person thinks the latter handsomer than the former. Besides the harmony of the building, in an architectural point of view would be restored. At present it looks like a hat looped up on one side. Was the ediface situated out

in a field by itself upon an eminence, its grotesque figure would at once be apparent.

As an opportunity now presents, let this glaring defect in the outline of the house be remedied, preserving however the side entrance. By so doing, its looks will be improved, and the cost of facing, with stone, much reduced.

"A TAX PAYER."

/Jeffersonian, West Chester, Pa., April 30, 1859./

14. The Court House.

"We beg leave to protest against the removal of the pilasters from the south front of the Court House. Of course, the stone-cutter would accept such a suggestion, for it would diminish his labor and increase his profits. But such an alteration would make the building resemble the Horticultural Hall. It would make it appear too low and too long. These pilasters conceal defective symmetry, and were intended for that purpose. They compensate for the want of proportion. Take them away and you only turn 'the cocked hat' into a 'tarpolian.'"

"COMMUNICATED."

/Jeffersonian, West Chester, Pa., May 14, 1859./

15. "-PUTTING ON THE GRINDSTONE.- Workmen have commenced putting the grindstone on the Court House. It will be a grand affair. The Court, lawyers, jurors and constables, will have a chance to sharpen themselves by rubbing against the outside without extra cost."

/Jeffersonian, West Chester, Pa., May 14, 1859./

16. "Charles Fairlamb County Treasurer pay to Gray and Paul Four thousand eight hundred dollars, balance in full for repairs at Court House agreeably to the annexed Contracts, dated March 16th 1859, and May 4th 1859."

\$4800

Joseph Russell

Titus W Gheen Commissioners

Benjn Hartman

"Received December 31st 1859 of Charles Fairlamb County Treasurer the sum of Four thousand eight hundred dollars being the balance in full for repairs at Court House, agreeable to the annexed Contracts dated March 16th and May 4th AD 1859."

\$4800

Gray & Paul"

/December 31, 1859./

17.

"GIVE US WE AIR."

In the South-east half of our Courtroom lays the negro quarter. At every Quarter Session the Black Brigade takes possession of it, not allowing a single white man to invade its sacred precincts. At least one hundred of the colored friends of Stevens, Sumner and Hickman, are found sitting there regularly during court hours, eating pea nuts, squirting tobacco juice, sweating from the heat of the furnace, and filling the atmosphere with Africa's balmy odors. The door keeper gets mad; the constables walk about pointing their long poles among the greasy crowd; and the care-taker of the room, after adjournment, goes with his broom gathering up the rubbish of pea nut shells, and washing off pools of spittle.

This week the black brigade were out in full force, and the other parts of the room were densely crowded. The weather being cold the furnace sent up its volume of heated air beyond what is customary even. The Court was annoyed, and ordered the Constables-'Give us air- open that window in the South-east corner, and that one opposite in the North-east corner.' This afforded some relief from the stifling atmosphere.

Now the Jeffersonian adopts this order as a good one for the next campaign: 'Give us air.' Yes, Messrs. Stevens & Co., the county wants air, and will have it. New Hampshire, in a few days, will open the window and give you fresh air from the North-east, abating the stench of this vile negro business.

'Give us air!' Yes, says Ohio, we will, from our prairies. 'Air you Want?' asks Pennsylvania, and the current comes from the valleys and mountain tops, driving off noisome smells from her borders. The country wants wholesome air, and a sounding storm sweeps from West to East, relieving the political health of the people.

The cry is a capital one, 'Air-air-give us air.' The black brigade and its commanders must move to Raccoon Hollows."

/Jeffersonian, West Chester, Pa., February 1, 1868./

18.

"FOUNTAIN.-Messrs. Garrett & Jones, marble men of our borough, we see, are putting in a drinking fountain in front of the Court House, in High St. This will be a great convenience to Sambo, while lounging round the corner during

court week."

/Jeffersonian, West Chester, Pa., July 24, 1869./

19. "THAT FOUNTAIN, that is in process of erection on the Court House pave, on High Street, seems to be a special point for jest. The Record gives it a hard dig. Seriously, we are afraid it will turn out a great nuisance; still, no one can do otherwise than commend the object aimed at. If it turns out a blessing we shall be glad; if a monument of folly, it can be closed up. The description of the fountain is suggestive of the age. After a season of severe butchery, we are drifting into the other extreme of philanthropy, and this is to be a good emblem. It is to cost \$350, of marble in imitation of rockwork; on the inner side is to be a basin or trough for the two-legged species to drink from; on the street side, will be a basin or trough for horses and cows, and near the ground one for dogs and - hogs, to quench their thirst at. What better arrangements could be made or suggested for the comfort of dumb animals. Any one that would sneer at this laudable arrangement, or in any way attempt to throw it into ridicule, deserves the frowns of all good moralists, and we shall certainly give all such 'a piece of our mind.' While giving this public trough our unqualified approval, there is another idea that suggests itself very forcibly, and we doubt not will be act-upon immediately. If we, as true philanthropists, expect to reap rich harvests from county people, we should look well to their comfort in other matters. Strangers do not like to invade private domain."

/Jeffersonian, West Chester, Pa., July 31, 1869./

20. "THAT FOUNTAIN, 'has been did.' It is now a fixture; was completed on Wednesday last; and the beautiful workmanship of our townsmen Messrs Garrett & Jones, begins to have a soiled appearance. People should keep their wet and soiled fingers off the marble. It is a substantial looking affair and the work well done. The intention is good, and if appreciated in proportion, those instrumental in its erection will be amply repaid by a consciousness of doing a good thing."

/Jeffersonian, West Chester, Pa., August 28, 1869./

21. "There are but a very few of our citizens as they tread the Court House pavement on their way to the post office and look up at the old town clock, to note the passing time or to set their watches thereby, that know anything of the excitements that attended the selection of the mechanic who should be entrusted with its construction.

Nearly fifty years ago the following subscription book was circulated amongst the citizens of West Chester, viz: 'We whose names are hereunto subscribed do promise to pay to David Townsend, or order, the sums set opposite our respective names, to be appropriated towards the erection of a TOWN CLOCK, to be placed upon the Court House, in the borough of West Chester, as soon as a sufficient sum can be obtained for that purpose. September 29, 1835.'

Out of the 200 persons who signed that promise only 15 now survive.

Under that subscription about \$1000 was subscribed and paid in to the Treasurer, David Townsend. The Bank of Chester County led off with a subscription of \$100 and was followed by the names of Doctor Darlington, David Townsend, Nathan H. Sharpless, Wm. Williamson, Dr. W. Worthington, John W. Townsend, Ziba Pyle, Judge Darlington, Wm. H. Dillingham, Joseph J. Lewis, Enos Smedley, Wm. Everhart, Henry S. Evans and others, citizens always awake to the interests of the borough. When that was done the grave question was agitated as to whom the task of its construction should be committed.

The gentleman who was then Sheriff of the county had a friend up about Waynesburg, whose business was that of a clock maker, and for whom the job was earnestly solicited. Some of the older subscribers were the owners of watches that had been selected and purchased for them by Isaiah Lukens, an eminent clock maker of Philadelphia, who was reported to be very skillful in his line, and who had made the clock on the State House there.

Two parties were formed, one of them led by the Sheriff and the other led by the friends of Lukens, town meetings were held, speeches made and the controversy waxed warm.

The argument on one side was, give the poor man a chance and let him have an opportunity to show that he can make as good a clock as anyone; on the other, the argument was, give the job to a man who having had experience in that kind of work will make a clock and warrant it to be of the most reliable character.

Much feeling manifested, one party was denounced as silk stocking aristocrats and opposed to the poor man, whilst the other was held to be demagogical and seeking a job regardless of consequences. The counsels of the conservatives prevailed and the work was given to Isaiah Lukens, who made the clock as it now stands.

On the 3d day of September, 1836, nearly a year after the subscription opened, the clock was started running and its tireless hands have been noting the hours, with few interruptions from that day to the present time.

John Hall, a watchmaker here, had the care of it up to the spring of 1862, twenty-six years, when it was given in charge of our venerable and respected fellow citizen William Sharpless, who with loving care superintended its movements and kept it in the strict line of duty until the first of April, 1882, when, parting with it as with an old friend he committed its custody to the younger hands of Wm. H. Freeman, watch maker, who now has it in charge."

/Village Record, West Chester, Pa., May 27, 1884./

22. TOWN CLOCK 100 YEARS OLD

"The clock in the steeple of the Court House is this year celebrating its centennial anniversary.

Purchased in 1835, it was at first installed in the old Court House, and when the present building was erected in 1846, it was moved to the spire. The clock was constructed by Isaiah Lukens, of Philadelphia, and is a most excellent piece of mechanism.

In its one hundred years of labor at keeping time, there have been very few occasions when it has failed in its purpose, and seldom have repairs been necessary.

Joseph W. Belt, who is in charge of the clock at present, some time ago installed an electrical winding apparatus, which made unnecessary the tedious winding of the clock; otherwise it remains much in the same condition as when placed in position.

Fifty years ago this summer, the illuminated dials were placed on its four faces."

/Daily Local News, West Chester, Pa., June 7, 1935./

23. "Time has a way of running out, even on bequests.

In the particular bequest which concerns West Chester the element of time is of more than ordinary significance because it involves the community's 'official' timepiece, the 119-year-old clock which started ticking away the hours in the Court House tower when Andrew Jackson was President and Abe Lincoln was a clerk in a country store at New Salem, Ill. And that, as one man was heard to remark, was quite a 'spell' back.

Heir to a legacy back in 1940 and given 15 years in which to make the purchase, Borough Council, at the turn of the year, came face to face with the truth of the stern fact that 'time and tide wait for no man.' It has now entered into a contract for the purchase and instalation of a clock to replace the present one.

But before the change is made let's look at the historic timepiece square in the face. It was in 1835 that a group of West Chester residents gathered at the Chester County Hotel, now the Mansion House, to discuss the need for a clock 'of sufficient power to warn every family in the borough of the time as it passed.' David Townsend who was cashier of the Bank of Chester County, now the National Bank of Chester County and Trust Company, was named treasurer and it was to him that nearly \$1,000 was paid by citizens interested in the project. Townsend's bank headed the list of subscribers with \$100.

Within less than a year, September 3, 1836, the clock was in service. The works, an eight-day movement, were made by the Seth Thomas firm located in Connecticut, and the bell whose sound was to be heard in all parts of the town, was cast by J. Willbank, of Philadelphia.

In the long intervening years the old clock has faithfully ticked away the hours, save for short periods when repairs were made or adjustments required. It is one of the few 'sentinels' of the past that continues to serve the community today.

When the century-old works are removed in order to make room for the new, the most fitting repository would be the museum of the Chester County Historical Society where future generations could see the mechanism that kept the County Seat on time for well over a hundred years. If this comes to pass, there will be less regret on the part of many as the old clock is taken down from its lofty perch above the Court House.

One caretaker who had looked after the timepiece for more than 20 years, observed at the time of West Chester's sesquicentennial (1948), that with proper care the clock should be good for another hundred years. In view of this, if the works were mounted and cared for at the Historical Society there's a possibility that the historic timepiece could continue to tick away the hours, if for nothing more than sentimental reasons.

West Chester has always had a penchant for preserving those things that call up the past. It is to be hoped that

in this particular instance the admirable trait will once more make itself felt."

/Daily Local News, West Chester, Pa., January 8, 1955./

PART 11. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a fine, well-proportioned and dignified court house in the Greek Revival style designed by Thomas U. Walter.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Rectangular; hexastyle prostyle; sixty-two (62) feet by one hundred and nineteen (119) feet, plus a twelve (12) foot portico.
2. Foundations: Stone. The first floor is supported by heavy stone and brick arches with groins.
3. Wall construction: "The New Court House is progressing. The foundations are laid and the superstructure of Brick Work has been commenced. The brick walls we observed are two feet thick." /Village Record, West Chester, Pa., June 16, 1846./ These were first covered with mastic, later faced with Pictou Stone. See newspaper clippings that have been copied under Part I, D. The portico is supported by six cast-iron columns with Corinthian capitals. They are an inch thick and filled with brick masonry. Only one iron worker is mentioned in the list of workmen and suppliers - Edge T. Cope. He had a large iron foundry in East Bradford township which borders West Chester on the West. These great fluted cast-iron columns may be his work.
4. Porches: Monumental portico on east with six Corinthian columns.
5. Chimneys: Four original chimneys standing on north side.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The east front has the original doorway. The south front original doorway has been made into a window.

- b. Windows and shutters: Window openings are apparently all original. The windows are one-over-one-light double-hung sash without shutters.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Low pitch gable and valley roof. Originally covered with copper which was removed in 1856 and sold for \$1,459.28. The new tin roof cost \$1,127.16.
- b. Cornice: The original cornice on all sides with dentils, but no frieze or decorative sculpture.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The original tower rises from the mid-ridge of the roof on the east facade. It is a polygonal structure of four faces with flattened corners between each face. There is a clock on each side. The top section is rounded and more curvilinear in design. A weather vane tops the tower.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: It is a two story building. The original floor plan cannot be found though the present plan shows very little change. A corridor runs from east to west with county offices on either side and the court room on the second floor, all showing few alterations as to walls. The present building shows fairly clearly the original plan with a corridor from the east end to the west end with offices on either side. The court room on the second floor of the original building is also relatively the same. In the 1880's the newspapers had letters and articles on ways to enlarge the building, and the ideas there expressed show the plan to be as stated. Instead of such violent changes as were then proposed, a new wing was added as mentioned under Part 1, A, 5 of this report.
- 2. Stairways: Stairway in southeast corner leading to court room and tower seems to be original.
- 3. Flooring: Old floors of brick as nearly as it is possible to tell now. They are at present covered with cement.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered.
- 5. Doorways and doors: Original ones seem all to have remained, except for the iron doors to each office, which once made each room very fireproof. The inner door to each room is of wood, and seems to be original.

6. Trim: Original to a great extent in offices, but mostly replaced in court room. Cornice in court room appears to be original.
7. Hardware: Little of the original remains, except for that on the east door to the court room.
8. Lighting: Nothing original left. Twentieth century lighting facilities.
9. Heating: Originally heated by stoves and furnaces. Now supplied with steam from town plant.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Court House faces east on High Street with the main entrance on this side. The building sits well back from the sidewalks on both east front and south side. It faces the National Bank of Chester County and Trust Company, designed by the same architect on the east front.
2. Enclosures: None now. It once had a cast-iron fence in 1870 as shown by a photograph; parts of the fence are still in use elsewhere in town.
3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks: Walks lead to the different doors.
5. Landscaping: Well landscaped. An early twentieth-century statue to the armed forces is in the southeast corner of the lot, with good plantings about it and elsewhere.

Prepared by Bart Anderson
Curator, Chester County
Historical Society
National Park Service
July 1958

Addendum to
Chester County Courthouse
10 North High Street
West Chester Borough
Chester County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1119

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PHOTOCOPY

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243